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# ALICE IN BLUNDERLAND

**A HUMOROUS SKETCH IN ONE ACT**

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## ALICE IN BLUNDERLAND

**SCENE:** The Mad Hatter's shop. There should be a lot of old hats of all descriptions lying around.

**CHARACTERS:** Alice, *who need not wear any particular costume.* The Mad Hatter. *He should be as eccentrically dressed as possible, with a top hat, frock coat, etc. If he can achieve or develop a silly and slightly mad expression it would be better. He should alternate a silly smile, an idiotic laugh, and furious and futile temper.*

(Curtain rises with the entry of Alice looking around her with a surprised air; the Mad Hatter is staring at her stupidly.)

**A.:**

Well, here I am at last, in Blunderland, though what I came for I don't know. It seems an awfully queer place.

**M.H.:**

Tee hee, I don't know what you came for either. Nobody asked you and I suppose you've got a return ticket haven't you? Goodbye, but before you go tell me what's so queer about our country.

**A.:**

Well, to begin with, everything seems upside down, and nothing makes sense. Besides, if you will forgive my saying so, you all seem a little mad.

**M.H.:**

(*Getting up in a temper, waving his arms, knocking the hats about and shouting.*) OF COURSE EVERYTHING IS UPSIDE DOWN. Why shouldn't it be? We decided long ago, just after we escaped from—er, where we were, to run things that way. It may be crazy but we like it that way—besides, it pays—some of us. And as for making sense,—it's not supposed to. Sense is common and we are very select.

**A.:**

But from what I can see this queer system does not seem to make anybody happy, and if it does not do that it can't be much good.

**M.H.:**

Ha, ha, that is a good joke. I must tell that to the March Hare. Fancy wanting the people to be happy! He, He, He-Ho, Ho, Ho! Why you silly, ignorant child. That's the very thing we are trying to avoid. We decided long ago in our sappy—I mean sapient—way, that happiness was not only unnecessary, but actually degenerating. See how happy (*grins inanely*) I am, except when you irritate me, and yet nobody could call me a mental genius, except in finance, and all that requires is stupidity and bluff.

**A.:**

But you so-called Financiers are only a small minority of the people, and a very silly portion at that. Why not give the majority some consideration? Don't you ever consult them?

**M.H.:**

Oh yes, we consult them every four or five years, A-ha! ha! ha! ha! but we take good care to see that they vote for our way of life, by a lot of wonderful promises and a small, well-disguised dose of threats. You see, or you would see if you were not so ridiculously sane, that all the people need is regulating—he! he!—yes, regulating—and we've got that down to a fine art. By our wonderful topsy-turby financial system we are regulating their lives twenty-four hours a day. We regulate what they shall eat, what they shall wear, what they shall work at or even if they shall do any of these things at all. We really are wonderfully efficient. (*Strides up and down and puffs out his chest, and ends up with a silly grin.*)

**A.:**

I don't see much efficiency in that. From what I have seen, most of the people don't seem very well fed, and as for clothes—most of the people will soon look like Eve before the Fall. So your boasted efficiency does not bring much result. What do you get out of it? Is it this thing you call money?

**M.H.:**

You'll drive me out of my senselessness with your foolish questions. Of course it's not money we want. (*Stamps back and forth.*) We've got more of that than we can use. See all the hats I have got. (*Waves his arms.*) No, it is power, POWER! P O W E R! we want and must have, to regulate

the people, and the way to get that is—and of course this is a secret (*starts to shout*)—to accumulate all the money we can ourselves and see that the common herd are always short, so that we can keep them in subjugation. The only way to keep these common people in control is to keep them on the ragged edge of destitution.

A.:

You're getting stupider and stupider.

M.H.:

Young woman, if you call me stupid again I will throw a hat at you. You talk of my being stupid as if it was a crime. I'd have you know I glory in it—Yes, GE-LOR-RIE in it, my little friend. (*Leers at Alice.*)

A.:

But what's the reason of it all? Here you have a lovely country, filled with all the good things of life and in such quantities that EVERYONE could have plenty, and yet you are always complaining of being poor.

M.H.:

(*Getting angrier and angrier.*) You talk like an ignorant savage. You evidently have no knowledge of Finance. (*Starts screaming at the top of his voice.*) Why don't you be like me? I don't understand it myself but I believe in it absolutely. Why wouldn't I when it has brought me all these hats? (*Voice drops to a shocked croak.*) You evidently come from a country that is so far beyond the bounds of civilisation and so far behind the times that they just use their resources for the people, (*with emphasis*), but I am glad to say WE have grown beyond that stage. (*Triumphantly*) WE are civilized.

A.:

Yes, I see you are, poor things. I feel so sorry for you. But what do you gain by this civilization?

M.H.:

(*Getting angry again.*) That is a grossly material question, and don't you dare feel sorry for ME. It's an insult and I just won't stand for it.

A.:

And what will you do about it?

**M.H.:**

I'll tell the Red Queen and she'll cut off your . . . your . . . credit.

**A.:**

Pooh, who cares about your old credit anyway? It's getting pretty mouldy, if you ask me.

**M.H.:**

Well, I didn't ask you. (*Leering at Alice.*) As if I would ask YOU anything, you—you—you nincompoop. You, with your immature mind, are incapable of grasping the wonderful complications of our civilization. (*Walking away.*) I think I must send a missionary to your country. (*Turns on his heel suddenly.*) Why, you poor heathen, I bet you haven't even got a BANK in your country.

**A.:**

(*With indignation.*) Don't you dare send a missionary to my country to corrupt my people. You've ruined too many other countries already. And as for not having a bank, that's just where you are wrong, Mr. Smartie. We have a bank and a good one at that.

**M.H.:**

Well, if you have a bank you must be using our system already.

**A.:**

Nothing of the kind. OUR bank is not just a central bank, but a real PEOPLE'S BANK. It just keeps the people's books. But you did not answer my question. What do you gain by your boasted civilization?

**M.H.:**

(*Waving his arms wildly.*) We don't answer questions in this country. It's bad for the morale of the people. (*Confidently*) But seeing you are only a foreigner and not an inmate—I mean a native—I don't mind telling you, though I doubt if you will understand. You take too elemental a view of this question. All you can see is the wealth and the people, and in your crude way you want to connect the two. You have no idea of the fine points of the system, or the actual fact that we of the INTELLIGENTSIA MUST RULE.

**A.:**

(*With worried look.*) But I cannot see why you must rule, or

why the people submit, unless they are all as mad as you.

**M.H.:**

We rule by fear.

**A.:**

Still I don't see. Why should the people be afraid of **you**? You don't look very formidable to me.

**M.H.:**

They do not fear us, though I **am** a very formidable figure. Tee, hee hee! (*With exaggerated cunning.*) We keep in the background. We merely create the condition of life so that they live in constant fear of those conditions, both for themselves, and what is more effective, for their families.

**A.:**

(*With disgust.*) And **THAT** is civilization! As for the fine points of your crazy system, they are too fine for me. I haven't got a microscope.

**M.H.:**

(*Walking about, waving his arms.*) There you go again. If I wasn't already mad you'd drive me crazy with your unfair criticisms.

**A.:**

Unfair? Are they not true?

**M.H.:**

(*Peevishly.*) That has nothing to do with it. (*Wags his finger at Alice.*) **ANY** criticism of our glorious system is unfair. **WE** are the only ones who are competent to criticize. People like you who are sane—I mean simple—don't realise the difficulties of foreign exchange, foreign trade, protection of markets, maintaining rates of interest and a hundred and one details that complicate the situation.

**A.:**

Wrong again, Mr. Hatter. We know all about those crazy complications that your evil system has brought about, and have decided that they must be avoided like the pest.

**M.H.:**

(*Spitting indignantly.*) Why you—you—you ignoramus you, you little upstart snippit, you are attacking the very foundations of our system. Don't you see that if there were

no difficulties of this sort there would be no complications and consequently no system. If our Bankers hear you they they will have to deport you.

**A.:**

They won't need to deport me. From what I've seen of your civilization I shall not want to stay long in Blunderland. I just want to make some notes to take back to my people. How they will laugh when they hear of all the efforts you make to be poor and miserable.

**M.H.:**

Young Lady, I would have you know that although we may be poor and miserable we have brought this about from **choice** in the interest of scientific economics. We sacrifice ourselves on the altar of Science.

**A.:**

You mean you sacrifice the people. YOU look plump and well fed enough.

**M.H.:**

I will thank you, young lady, not to cast aspersions on my figure. I have taken great pains to build it up and am rather proud of it. It is necessary for the chosen few to have the best so that we may be fit mentally and physically to rule the masses.

**A.:**

I agree, you look healthy enough, though a trifle puffy, but I can't see much evidence of superior mentality with the hopeless muddle you have landed yourselves in.

**M.H.:**

It is true that our mentality is not of the finest quality, but what we lack in brains we make up for in cunning and ruthlessness, cleverly disguised. You must remember that our plans are in the process of development. The plan, when completed, will be a revelation. Yes, indeed, a revelation. Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

**A.:**

It is a revelation already—of stupidity. But what do the people think of your sacrificing them in the interests of your boasted science?

**M.H.:**

(*Looks hurt and pompous.*) We have spent years, young lady, in trying, with some small degree of success to train the people NOT to think. WE do their thinking for them. (*With great deliberation.*) We fill them with fear and **fear kills thought.**

**A.:**

**You** do their thinking for them! Why, the poor things, no wonder they are in such a hopeless mess. You are right in saying that fear kills thought, but why do you need to keep them downtrodden?

**M.H.:**

(*Leaning forward confidentially.*) In the Interests of the FINANCIERS, who are the Intelligentsia, we **must** have unlimited power. If once the people realised that the wealth of the country was always available, and that our method of restricting the purchasing power was all that kept them from enjoying their own wealth they might turn on us and return to the heathen, barbaric state that your people enjoy so freely. By the way, you spoke of a People's Bank. How does it operate? Surely the people do not really control it?

**A.:**

Of course they control it, stupid. If they did not it would not be a people's bank.

**M.H.:**

You keep calling me stupid, (*leans forward with a silly leer*) but you don't know the depth of cunning concealed beneath my somewhat vapid exterior. But the idea of the people controlling their own bank is preposterous. Controlling their own bank. Ha! ha! ha! Ho, ho, ho, ho! We have a central bank but instead of the people's government controlling it, **it** controls the government. See?

**A.:**

What funny people you must be. Why, if they tried to do that in my country there would be a revolution. You see, our people **THINK**. Our bank is there to **HELP** the people, not to restrict them. The Bank issues dividends to the people so that they can enjoy the goods they produce, and their



buying power always equals their power of production. In other words, we pay the PEOPLE the dividends that you pay to the Financiers; and by similar sane means we have made the machines our servants instead of our masters.

**M.H.:**

How does your ruling body, Finance, like that? Don't they put the pressure on to do away with such a revolutionary system?

**A.:**

You really are a funny old man. What pressure could they put on?

**M.H.:**

(*Intones.*) Foreclosure on mortgages, refusing credit, withdrawal of currency, clamping down on industry, distraining on crops, are some of the methods WE use, and we find them very effective.

**A.:**

Well, I'd just like to take your wonderful Financiers to my country for a time. They'd learn a lesson they would never forget. That is, if they have not got beyond the stage of learning anything. Now listen carefully, little man, and go back and tell the rest of your cunning nitwits. To begin with, we have no mortgages so they couldn't foreclose; secondly we have our own credit so we don't need theirs or their dirty pieces of paper; thirdly they couldn't interfere with industry because that is encouraged and protected by the people themselves; fourthly they couldn't distrain on the crops because they have no hold on them; and lastly WE HAVE NO FINANCIERS. We eliminated them a long time ago.

**M.H.:**

(*Looking at Alice with wide-eyed surprise.*) What, no financiers! What a preposterous idea. Tee-hee! Fancy a world without financiers! Don't you realise that would be such a step backward that you wouldn't be very far from the Garden of Eden, and all our modern progress would have gone for nothing. Our Financiers are the very foundation of our modern civilization.

**A.:**

Well, it looks as if your foundation is crumbling pretty badly

and soon you will find yourself in the jungle whether you like it or not, unless you land in another climate. What will you do if your people ever wake up?

**M.H.:**

Oh, we take care of that. We have Professors of Economics who discuss finance in such learned and incomprehensible terms that nobody understands them and so are kept in awe of the whole subject and are gradually lulled to sleep. In fact I always fall asleep myself when I try to think about it. I sometimes wonder if that is not what has made me mad. But after all if it brings me lots of hats I am satisfied. (*Stalks round stroking hats, grinning and muttering.*)

**A.:**

By the way, what do you do with your hats? Were they not made for people to wear? Why don't you distribute them? There are a lot of hatless people among you.

**M.H.:**

That is a silly idea. . Don't you see how it would disrupt the **MARKETS** if we did that? (*Picking up one hat after another and stroking them fondly.*) Besides, I like to keep them and try them on. They are a symbol of power and wealth.

**A.:**

To my mind they are a symbol of chuckleheadedness. But how does this funny idea work out in your relationship to other countries? I have been told that all you civilized countries have to have a favorable **BALANCE OF TRADE**. How do you **ALL** manage that?

**M.H.:**

You **WOULD** ask that question. Of course we recognize that if some countries have a favorable balance, others must have an unfavorable one, but we are beginning to console ourselves with the knowledge that if our balance is unfavorable it merely means that we owe the other fellow more than he owes us, and as we know, tee, hee, that this debt will never be paid, we are really one up on the other chap.

**A.:**

You mean that you are all going to default?

**M.H.:**

Hush! (*Voice sinks to hoarse whisper.*) You must not men-

tion that word. There is only one Province in our country that defaults, the rest of us ADJUST.

**A.:**

It means the same thing, doesn't it, if you don't intend to pay?

**M.H.:**

Doubtless, but in our system we find it necessary to use different terms for different circumstances. What is defaulting in one province is something much more polite in another. But this question of favorable balances is rather awkward, though we have found a temporary remedy.

**A.:**

And what is that?

**M.H.:**

Well, when things get too bad we start a war or two and then get straightened out for a fresh start. (*Confidentially.*) As a matter of fact, we have a war on now, though it seems to be growing to bigger proportions than I like. It MIGHT bring about a financial crisis that could prove very unpleasant.

**A.:**

A war! Oh, you horrible people! Do you mean to tell me you actually kill people in the interests of International Trade?

**M.H.:**

Of course we do. That is where our efficiency shows up at its best. In fact, the science of killing people in large quantities has reached its peak. Oh, ho, yes! we are very, v-e-r-y thorough.

**A.:**

But how do the people stand for that? Do they not rebel? Or are there no women among you?

**M.H.:**

Um, yes, we have women here too. Charming creatures. (*Grinning*) I cut quite a figure among them. (*Becoming serious*) But there is no reason why the people should rebel. You see, what with (*lingering over each word*) unemployment, shortage of buying power—tee hee!—we see to that—hunger, fear and general hopelessness they don't much value their lives. (*In matter-of-fact tone*) Besides the more of them that are killed

off the more employment there is for those that are left, so that up till now we have had no trouble, though I must admit that there is now a growing unrest that is disturbing.

**A.:**

I should just think there would be. Your country is well named BLUNDERLAND, and if you people were in my country you would be confined as criminally insane.

**M.H.:**

(*Smirking*) Thank you for the compliment, my dear. It has always been my ambition to excel in insanity, but there is so much competition amongst our leaders that I have never got very far. But I should very much like to visit your country. If they are all like you they must be a strange lot. I should certainly be considered a super idiot there which would be quite an honour. Do you think they might make me a kind of dictator if I went?

**A.:**

Well, I hate to hurt your feelings, but I'm afraid they are more likely to put you in the Zoo, or exhibit you in the museum as a relic of the bad old days.

**M.H.:**

(*Shouting with rage and waving his arms.*) How dare you, you insulting, insignificant shrimp. Get out of here, get out I say before I lose my temper. Get out, get out, and stay out.

**A.:**

All right, Mr. Looney, keep your—er—hat on. Put them all on, though why you wear a hat at all I can't see. You've got nothing to protect. I'm going back to Socredia (*starts walking off*) and can't get there too quick. Give your crazy Financiers my love and tell them I hope they will let me know when they decide to grow up. Goodbye, Mr. Simp of Simpleton. (*Exit with great dignity.*)

**M.H.:**

Of all the impertinent, sacrilegious, bumptious, horrid, nasty, insignificant, specimens of the female species she is the worst I have ever met. (*Starts throwing hats after her.*)

CURTAIN